School Quality Review Report

Merle J Abbett Elementary School
Fort Wayne Community School Corporation
January 22-23, 2018

Review Team Members

Thomas Hakim	Principal	Indianapolis Public Schools
Erin Stalbaum	Senior School Improvement Specialist	Indiana Department of Education
Jayne Sowers	Senior Technical Assistance: Policy, Practice, and Systems Change	American Institutes for Research
Flora Gitsis	State Director	Teachers of Tomorrow
Christopher McGrew	Special Education Teacher	Haverville Elementary School
Erin Kissling	Assistant Director of Literacy	Indiana Department of Education

Table of Contents

I. Background on the School Quality Review 3

II. Overview of the School Quality Review Process 4

III. Data Snapshot for Merle J Abbett Elementary School 5

IV. Evidence and Rating for School Turnaround Principle #3: Effective Instruction 8

V. Evidence and Rating for School Turnaround Principle #4: Curriculum, Assessment, and Intervention Systems 10

VI. Evidence and Rating for School Turnaround Principle #5: Effective Staffing Practices 11

VII. Recommendations 12

VIII. Appendix A: Evidence for Remaining School Turnaround Principles 15

I. Background on the School Quality Review

Public Law 221 (PL 221) was passed in 1999 before the enactment of the federal *No Child Left behind Act* (NCLB). It serves as the state's accountability framework. Among other sanctions, the law authorizes the Indiana State Board of Education (SBOE) to assign an expert team to conduct a School Quality Review for schools placed in the lowest category or designation of school performance for two consecutive years.

> *(a) The board shall direct that the department conduct a quality review of a school that is subject to IC 20-31-9-3. (b) The board shall determine the scope of the review and appoint an expert team under IC 20-31-9-3. (Indiana State Board of Education; 511 IAC 6.2-8-2; filed Jan 28, 2011, 3:08 p.m.: 20110223-IR-511100502FRA)*

The school quality review (SQR) is a needs assessment meant to evaluate the academic program and operational conditions within an eligible school. The SQR will result in actionable feedback that will promote improvement, including the reallocation of resources or requests for technical assistance. The process is guided by a rubric aligned to the United States Department of Education's "Eight Turnaround Principles" (see Appendix B). The school quality review includes a pre-visit analysis and planning meeting, onsite comprehensive review, and may include targeted follow-up visits.

State law authorizes the SBOE to establish an expert team to conduct the School Quality Review known as the Technical Assistance Team (TAT). Membership must include representatives from the community or region the school serves; and, may consist of school superintendents, members of governing bodies, teachers from high performing school corporations, and special consultants or advisers.

II. Overview of the School Quality Review Process

The School Quality Review process is designed to identify Merle J Abbett Elementary's strengths and areas for improvement organized around the United States Department of Education's Eight School Turnaround Principles. In particular, the School Quality Review process focused on two or three Turnaround Principles that were identified as priorities by the school and its district.

The on-site review consisted of the Technical Assistance Team (TAT) visiting the school for two days. During the two days, the TAT (1) conducted separate focus groups with students, teachers, instructional leadership team members, community members, and parents, (2) observed a professional learning community meeting with teachers, (3) observed instruction in 25 classrooms, and (4) interviewed school and district leaders.

Prior to the visit, teachers completed an online survey, with 10 of 34 teachers participating. Parents were also invited to complete a survey; 70 parent surveys were collected. Finally, the school leadership team completed a self-evaluation. Both surveys and the self-evaluation are made up of questions that align to school improvement principles and indicators (Appendix B).

III. Data Snapshot for Merle J Abbett Elementary School

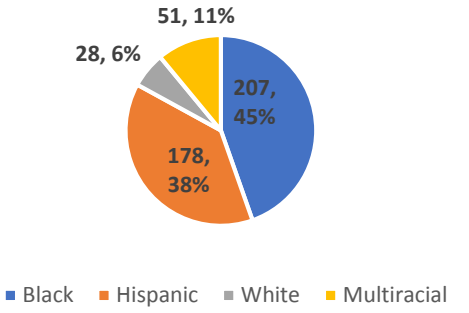
School Report Card

2015-2016 Report Card	*Points*	*Weight*	*Weighted Points*
Performance Domain Grades 3-8	21.75	0.5	10.88
Growth Domain Grades 4-8	61.80	0.5	30.90
Overall Points			41.8
Overall Grade			F

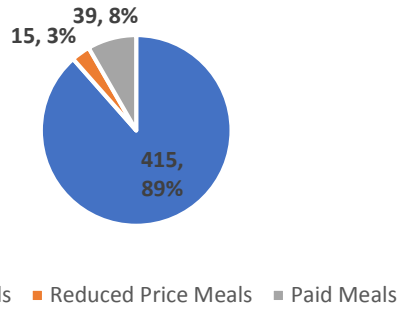
2016-2017 Report Card	*Points*	*Weight*	*Weighted Points*
Performance Domain Grades 3-8	22.30	0.5	11.15
Growth Domain Grades 4-8	83.90	0.5	41.95
Overall Points			53.1
Overall Grade			F

Enrollment 2017-2018: 469 students

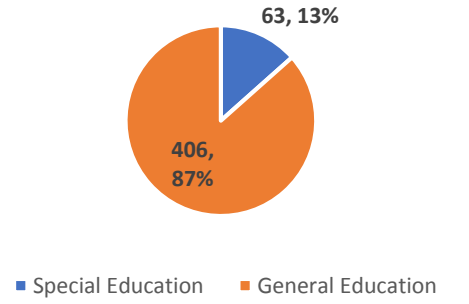
Enrollment 2017-2018 by Ethnicity



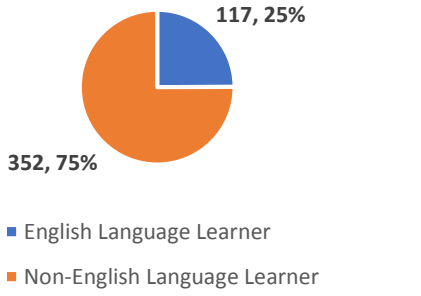
Enrollment 2017-2018 by Free/Reduced Price Meals



Enrollment 2016-2017 by Special Education



Enrollment 2016-2017 by English Language Learners

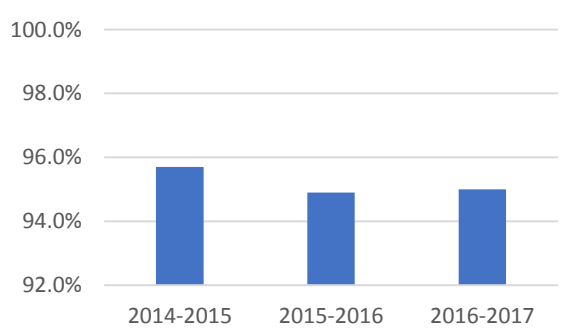


Attendance

Attendance by Grade

Grade	'14-'15	'15-'16	'16-'17
K	95%	92.8%	93.4%
1	95.5%	94.6%	95.6%
2	96.6%	95%	95%
3	95.6%	96.3%	96%
4	95.9%	95.8%	95.8%
5	97.1%	95.9%	96.0%

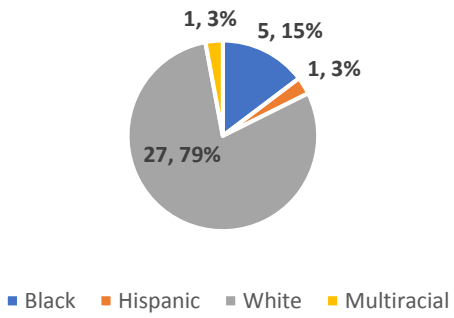
Attendance Rate Trend



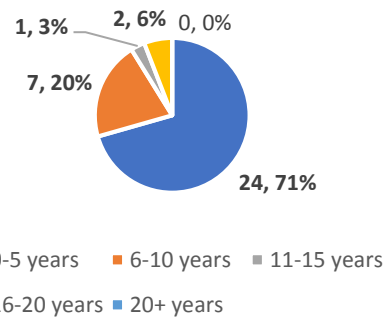
School Personnel

Teacher Count 2015-2016: 34

Teacher Count 2015-2016 by Ethnicity

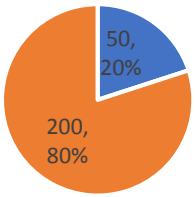


Teacher Count 2015-2016 by Years of Experience

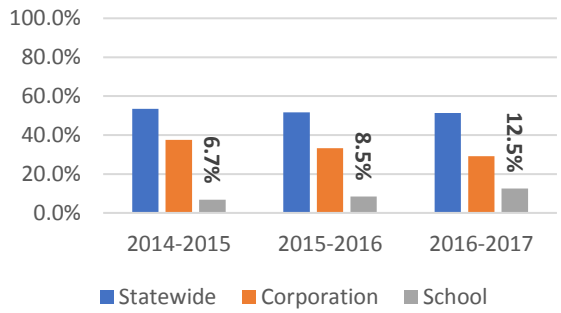


Student Academic Performance

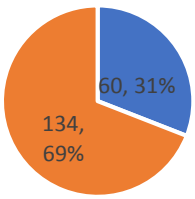
ISTEP+ 2016-2017
Both English/Language Arts and Math



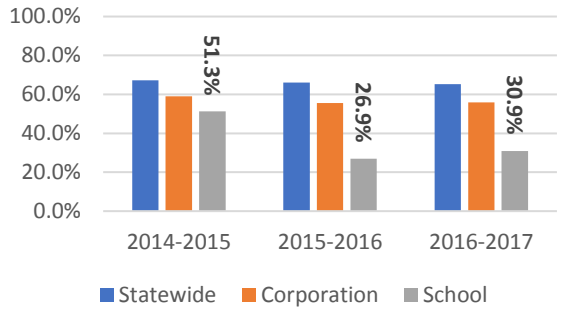
ISTEP+ Percent Passing Trend
Both English/Language Arts and Math



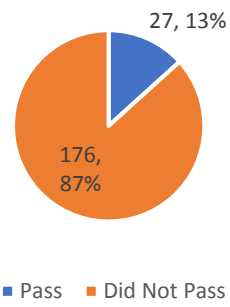
ISTEP+ 2016-2017: English/Language Arts



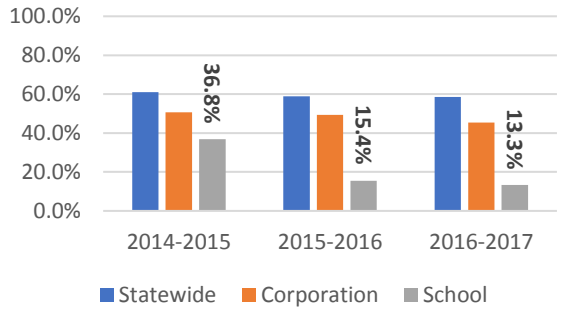
ISTEP+ Percent Passing Trend: English/Language Arts



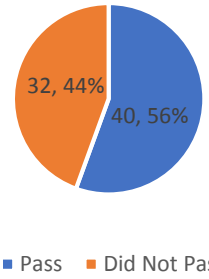
ISTEP+ 2016-2017
Math



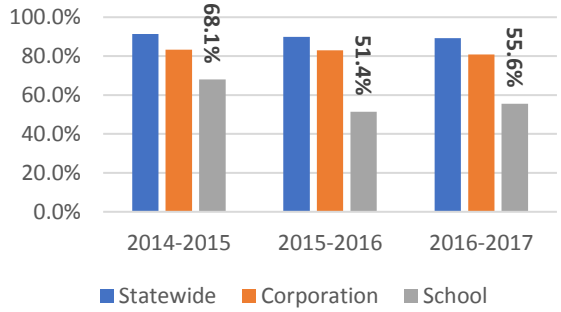
ISTEP+ Percent Passing Trend
Math



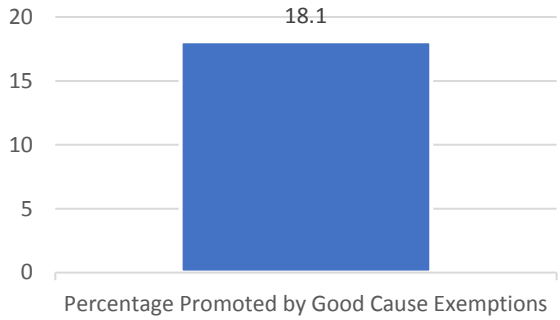
IREAD-3 2016-2017



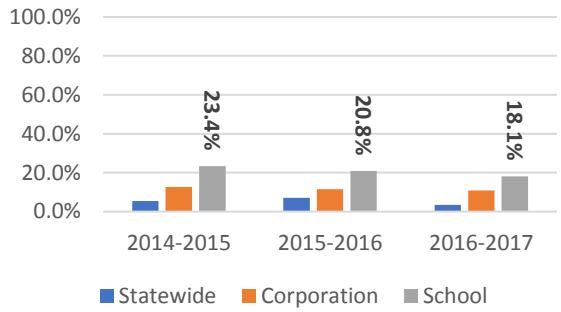
IREAD-3 Percent Passing Trend



IREAD-3 Percentage Promoted by Good Cause Exemptions 2016-2017



IREAD-3 Good Cause Promotion Exemption Trend



IV. Evidence and Rating for School Turnaround Principle #3: Effective Instruction

Background

The next three sections of the report illustrate the Technical Assistance Team's key findings, supporting evidence, and overall rating for each of the school's prioritized Turnaround Principles.

To thoughtfully identify these prioritized Turnaround Principles, school and district leaders used a "Turnaround Principle Alignment Tool" provided by the Indiana State Board of Education to determine the two to three Turnaround Principles that most closely align with the goals and strategies outlined in the school's improvement plan.

This report focuses on these prioritized Turnaround Principles to provide a strategically targeted set of findings and recommendations. Additional evidence on the other five Turnaround Principles can be found in Appendix A of this report.

School Turnaround Principle #3: Effective Instruction			
Evidence Sources			
Classroom Observations, Teacher Focus Group, Instructional Leadership Focus Group, Principal Focus Group, District Focus Group, Teacher Survey Data, Student Focus Group, Parent Focus Group, Artifacts Provided by Merle Abbett Elementary			
Rating			
1 Ineffective *No evidence of this happening in the school*	2 Improvement Necessary *Limited evidence of this happening in the school*	3 Effective *Routine and consistent*	4 Highly Effective *Exceeds standard and drives student achievement*

Evidence	
Strengths	Aligned Turnaround Principle Indicator(s)
• Professional learning for educators focuses on instructional strategies; many educators expressed gratitude for this supportive learning environment.	• 3.5, 5.2, 5.3, 5.5
• Several educators conferenced with students on an individual level, thus providing a strong model of checking for understanding for their colleagues.	• 3.2, 3.3, 3.5
• Anchor charts were highly visible in most classroom, helping students make connections to prior learning.	• 3.2, 4.4, 5.2

Areas for Improvement	Aligned Turnaround Principle Indicator(s)
• A standards-based curriculum is not followed with fidelity throughout the grade levels; lesson plan design is inconsistent.	• 3.1, 3.4, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 5.3, 5.5
• Few classrooms implemented varied instructional strategies; communicated lesson objectives did not correspond with observed instruction.	• 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4,3.6, 4.4, 5.2, 5.3, 5.5
• In few classrooms, were students responsible for the majority of the cognitive work of the lesson.	• 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 5.2, 5.3, 5.5
• Few SMART objectives were posted in classrooms and aligned to standards-based instruction.	• 3.1, 3.4, 4.1, 4.2, 4.4

V. Evidence and Rating for School Turnaround Principle #4: Curriculum, Assessment, and Intervention Systems

School Turnaround Principle #4: Curriculum, Assessment, and Intervention Systems			
Evidence Sources			
Classroom Observations, Teacher Focus Group, Instructional Leadership Focus Group, Principal Focus Group, District Focus Group, Teacher Survey Data, Artifacts Provided by Merle Abbett Elementary			
Rating			
1 Ineffective *No evidence of this happening in the school*	2 Improvement Necessary *Limited evidence of this happening in the school*	3 Effective *Routine and consistent*	4 Highly Effective *Exceeds standard and drives student achievement*
Evidence			
Strengths			Aligned Turnaround Principle Indicator(s)
• Educators receive frequent feedback based on non-evaluative walkthroughs to gauge instruction; administration has used this classroom walkthrough data to adjust professional learning.			• 4.2, 5.2, 5.3, 5.5
• Most students identified as below grade level on DIBELS are receiving additional instruction via an interventionist.			• 3.5, 4.5
Areas for Improvement			Aligned Turnaround Principle Indicator(s)
• Few grade levels utilize the Standards and Curriculum Implementation Plan (SCIPS) developed at the school level to drive instructional planning.			• 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4
• A full teacher coaching cycle has been planned and communicated to educators. However, the full teacher coaching cycle has not yet been implemented as indicated through teacher focus group conversations.			• 4.2, 5.2, 5.3, 5.5
• Rigorous formative assessments are not in place.			• 4.1, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5
• Students identified as “red” on DIBELS are receiving instruction via the interventionist; however, the instructional strategies and student progress are not communicated between the classroom teachers and interventionists. Additionally, the classroom teachers are not implementing intervention instruction in their classrooms. Intervention instruction may not address the root cause for reading below grade level.			• 3.5, 4.3, 4.5

VI. Evidence and Rating for School Turnaround Principle #5: Effective Staffing Practices

School Turnaround Principle #5: Effective Staffing Practices			
Evidence Sources			
Classroom Observations, Teacher Focus Group, Instructional Leadership Focus Group, Principal Focus Group, District Focus Group, Teacher Survey Data, Artifacts Provided by Merle Abbett Elementary			
Rating			
1 Ineffective *No evidence of this happening in the school*	2 Improvement Necessary *Limited evidence of this happening in the school*	3 Effective *Routine and consistent*	4 Highly Effective *Exceeds standard and drives student achievement*

Evidence	
Strengths	Aligned Turnaround Principle Indicator(s)
• Leadership has a strong focus on teacher development, as evidenced by the fact that targeted professional learning is offered two days a week.	• 5.2, 5.3, 5.5
• Teachers are provided collaboration time with the instructional coaches two days a week in a grade level setting for professional development.	• 5.4, 5.2, 5.3, 5.5
• Teachers are grateful for frequent professional learning support tied to their demonstrated areas for growth.	• 5.2, 5.3, 5.5
Areas for Improvement	Aligned Turnaround Principle Indicator(s)
• Targeted professional learning for support staff (e.g. Special Education, Instructional Assistants, English Language Learners) has not been provided.	• 5.3, 5.5
• Once the full coaching cycle for educators is in place, key take-aways from classroom observations should inform individualized professional learning.	• 5.2, 5.3, 5.5
• An induction, mentorship, and retention program is not present at the building level to support current staff members. As a Turnaround school that faces the challenge of recruiting and retaining highly effective teachers, additional support is needed.	• 5.1, 5.4

VII. Recommendations

Background

This section outlines an intentionally targeted set of recommendations that align to one or more of the school's prioritized Turnaround Principles. Anchored in the United States Department of Education's Turnaround Principles framework, these recommendations are representative of what the Technical Assistance Team believes to be the most immediate changes needed to accelerate growth in academic and non-academic student outcomes at Merle J Abbett Elementary School. These recommendations should not be thought of as an exhaustive set of school improvement strategies, but rather as a part of the ongoing and continuous school improvement process.

Recommendation 1
Collaboratively design and implement a district-wide scope and sequence that aligns to the Indiana Academic Standards-Based instruction. Building off of these scope and sequences, provide ample support for educators to create grade-level specific curriculum maps. Implement an annual and continuous system of evaluating the curriculum maps for fidelity of alignment and rigor.
Aligned Turnaround Principle(s)
3.1, 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 5.3, 5.5
Rationale
Curriculum mapping can be used to visualize, align, and document student learning outcomes in both a vertical and horizontal progression. Curriculum mapping allows educators to not only identify a progression of standards-based instruction, but also provides an opportunity to assess curricular data, such as student learning outcomes in order to drive further instruction. Having a strong curriculum map within each grade level allows educators to focus on Tier I instructional practices, versus randomly selecting standards to teach on a weekly basis. The alignment of the curriculum maps allows for students to experience learning that builds upon itself on an annual basis, providing a rigorous learning continuum for academic achievement and growth. Evidence throughout the review suggests that few educators utilize the SCIPS created several years prior to the visit. Educators stated that they plan their instructional decisions on a weekly basis with no scope and sequence of standards in which to refer. This was coupled with classroom observations in which lesson objectives that align to Indiana Academic Standards were present in 37% of observations. The district acknowledged that building a scope and sequence of standards was a priority, in order to provide school leaders and educators with the resources necessary to develop high-quality curriculum maps.

Recommendation 2
Research evidence-based response to intervention models in order to design and implement a school-wide intervention program that targets student needs. Consider determining student needs through a triangulation of data which includes a root cause analysis screening component. Implement a continuous evaluation cycle of the intervention model in order to ensure fluid movement of students as their academic needs fluctuate throughout the school year. Examine the allocation of resources to ensure intervention program fidelity leads to continuous and accelerated student progress.
Aligned Turnaround Principle(s)
3.5, 4.5, 5.3
Rationale
To ensure students are in the correct small group intervention, multiple sources of data must be considered in a systematized manner. By doing so, academic growth will be accelerated through evidence-based instruction provided by highly effective educators in a manner tied to individual student's academic needs. An intervention program's efficiency and effectiveness is highly dependent on the resources allocated for implementation. Through John Hattie's research, a response to intervention program presents a 1.1% effect size as it relates to student achievement. [1] Evidence throughout the review demonstrated that students are enrolled in intervention classes based upon their DIBELS assessment. Once enrolled in intervention, instructional strategies are determined solely based on what is necessary to improve students' DIBELS results. There is no evidence of a root cause analysis; additionally, educators expressed a lack of communication among the interventionists and the classroom teachers. Per this evidence, the triangulation of data in order to determine student needs for intervention is not a consistent practice. Classroom observations and focus group conversations demonstrated that students not enrolled in classes with the interventionists are instructed based upon each educator's discretion within the classroom; this qualitative data is coupled with classroom observation in which differentiated instruction was observed in only 6 out of 25 classrooms. Thus, a system for identifying needs for all students, and planning instruction based on those needs, was not evident.

[1] Killian, Shaun (2017) Hattie Effect Size 2016 Update. Retrieved from: http://www.evidencebasedteaching.org.au/hattie-effect-size-2016-update/

Recommendation 3
In service of strengthening teacher effectiveness within the building, school and district leaders are encouraged to (1) leverage highly-effective educators within the district to serve as mentor teachers and/or academic coaches at Merle J Abbett and (2) implement the components of a comprehensive teacher development strategy that are not yet fully in place at the school, specifically a full teacher coaching cycle as well as teacher induction, mentorship, and retention initiatives. Additionally, the district is encouraged to promote the unique opportunity for impact and professional learning that comes with teaching at Merle J Abbett to highly effective educators currently serving elsewhere in the district.
Aligned Turnaround Principle(s)
5.1, 5.3, 5.4
Rationale
Declines in student achievement and growth in Indiana's highest-need LEAs, especially for students from low-income families, highlight the need for educator support systems that provide actionable feedback to teachers, creating professional learning communities where teachers share goals and responsibility for student outcomes, and forge a system where teachers have opportunity for ongoing professional development that can enhance instructional quality.[2] Evidence during the review demonstrated that recruiting highly effective educators has been an area of difficulty for the building. Due to the fact that 70.6% of educators are in their first five years of teaching experience, along with 18.1% of the staff on targeted support plans, the need for recruiting highly effective teachers to serve as mentors and academic coaches is vital to leveraging the turnaround efforts throughout the building. Additionally, a focus on supporting and growing staff development increases staff retention.

[2] Hallinger, P., Heck, R.H., Murphy, J, "Teacher evaluation and school improvement: An analysis of the evidence," Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability, no. 26 (2014): 5-28, Web.

VIII. Appendix A: Evidence for Remaining School Turnaround Principles

Background
We believe it is valuable for school and district leaders to have a summary of the TAT's findings and evidence for each of the eight Turnaround Principles. As such, this section of the report outlines key findings and supporting evidence for each of the Turnaround Principles that were not identified by school and district leaders as prioritized Turnaround Principles for this school.

This information is intentionally provided in an appendix to reinforce the importance of the previously stated findings, evidence, ratings, and recommendations for the school's prioritized Turnaround Principles.

School Turnaround Principle #1: School Leadership
Evidence Sources
Leadership Self-Evaluation, Leadership Focus Groups, Principal Meetings, District Leadership Focus Group, Educator Surveys, Educator Focus Groups, Student Focus Groups, Classroom Observations, Parent Surveys
Evidence Summary
Strengths • Out of the 70 parent surveys collected, 51 parents agreed or strongly agreed that, "The principal supports academically-focused relationships between teachers and parents." (1.1) • Out of the 10 educator surveys collected, 9 educators agreed or strongly agreed that, "Our principal communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families." (1.4) • Evidence throughout the review demonstrated that the principal conducts frequent walkthroughs and evaluations in order to monitor and improve school-wide instructional practices. (1.7) Areas for Improvement • Evidence throughout the review demonstrated that a standards-based curriculum is not utilized in each grade level to inform a scope and sequence of instruction. (1.5) • Although a professional learning module was presented over formative assessments, a coherent and aligned formative and summative assessment system is not evident. (1.6) • Few classrooms are staffed with highly effective educators; several educators are on targeted support plans or emergency licenses. (1.9)

School Turnaround Principle #2: Climate and Culture

Evidence Sources

Educator Surveys, Educator Focus Groups, Student Focus Groups, Classroom Observations, Parent Surveys

Evidence Summary

Strengths

- Out of 10 educator surveys collected, 9 educators agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "Our students are encouraged to behave well, relate well to others and have positive attitudes towards learning." (2.2)
- Out of 70 parent surveys collected, 63 parents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "Parents feel welcome, supported, and actively involved." (2.1)
- Some classrooms effectively used a Positive Behavior Intervention System to promote and reward positive behavior. (2.1)

Areas for Improvement

- Out of 10 educator surveys collected, 6 educators disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, "The school community supports a safe, orderly, and equitable learning environment." (2.1)
- Out of 10 educator surveys collected, 6 educators disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, "Our school has effective measures for promoting good attendance, eliminating truancy and tardiness." (2.3)
- Evidence collected indicated that behavior often impedes academic success for all students. (2.2, 2.3)

School Turnaround Principle #6: Enabling the Effective Use of Data

Evidence Sources

Instructional Leadership Focus Groups, Principal Meetings, Educator Surveys, Educator Focus Groups, Student Focus Groups, Classroom Observations, Parent Surveys

Evidence Summary

Strengths

- Professional learning focused on the triangulation of data in order to inform small group instructional decisions utilizing the work of Jennifer Serravallo. (6.3)
- District-wide climate and culture surveys are deployed on an annual basis. Data is used within the school improvement plan to set goals. (6.1)
- Walkthroughs are scheduled and focus on ensuring professional learning is embedded throughout the classroom. (6.3)

Areas for Improvement

- Out of 10 educator surveys collected, 8 educators disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, “Our school uses multiple forms of user friendly data.” (6.2)
- Evidence suggests a data management system that provides teachers with instant access to a range of data and analyses to inform decision making is not currently in place. (6.2)
- Besides DIBELS, no other formative or interim assessments are used consistently to inform instruction. (6.2)

School Turnaround Principle #7: Effective Use of Time

Evidence Sources

Leadership Focus Groups, Principal Meetings, Educator Surveys, Educator Focus Groups, Student Focus Groups, Classroom Observations, Parent Surveys

Evidence Summary

Strengths

- Staff are engaged in multiple forms of professional learning four days a week with coaching throughout the week that align to professional learning topics. (7.3)
- Out of 10 educator surveys collected, 8 educators agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “Our instructional time is protected with few interruptions.” (7.1)
- Out of 70 parent surveys collected, 56 parents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “Our school has a schedule that allows for parent communication with teachers.” (7.1)

Areas for Improvement

- Evidence during the review demonstrated that all students two or more years below grade level do not receive diagnostic assessments to drive their intervention placement and instruction. (7.2)
- Classroom observations illustrated that there is not sufficient time for intervention due to lengthy transitions at the beginning and end of scheduled intervention time. (7.2)
- Intervention time within the schedule holds a sole focus on reading instruction; math intervention is not embedded into the master schedule. (7.2)

School Turnaround Principle #8: Family and Community Engagement

Evidence Sources

Leadership Focus Groups, Principal Meetings, Educator Surveys, Educator Focus Groups, Student Focus Groups, Parent Surveys, Parent Focus Groups, Community Focus Groups

Evidence Summary

Strengths

- Out of 70 parent surveys collected, 61 parents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "Our school works with parents to build positive relationships and to engage them as partners in their children's learning." (8.1)
- Evidence during the review demonstrated that community groups are welcomed as members of the school family, collaborating over the needs of students. (8.2)
- School newsletters are provided for parents and community members to stay informed of the school's schedule and events. (8.1)

Areas for Improvement

- A resounding theme from the parent focus group was a lack of communication between from teachers as to how parents can support and reinforce school-based learning at home. (8.2)
- Evidence collected during the review indicated that parents desire more formal, ongoing parental involvement opportunities such as a parent/teacher organization. (8.2)